

Heflin Police Department and Alabama Department of Forensic Science Team with Othram to Identify 1990 Homicide Victim

After 33 years, Cleburne County Jane Doe is identified as Clara Kopp Reynolds of Georgia.

Solved

Summary

In February 1990, the remains of an unidentified individual were located in a wooded area near Evans Bridge Road in Heflin, Alabama, a small town situated nearly halfway between Birmingham, AL and Atlanta, GA on Interstate 20. A logging crew working in the area discovered the remains and contacted the Heflin Police Department. The Alabama Department of Forensic Science and Alabama Bureau of Investigations assisted local law enforcement in their search of the wooded area. Skeletal remains were collected and submitted to the Alabama Department of Forensic Science laboratory for identification. It was determined that the remains belonged to a White female. The woman's identity could not be established. Her age was difficult to determine due to the condition of the remains, but it was estimated that the woman was in her late twenties to late thirties at the time of her death. The woman's manner of death was determined to be homicide. She became known as "Cleburne County Jane Doe."



Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP84287. A forensic facial reconstruction was developed by LSU FACES and released to the public in hopes that the woman could be identified. Despite the extensive efforts of law enforcement, the case went cold and the identity of the woman remained a mystery. In 2022, the Heflin Police Department re-opened

the case with a goal of identifying the woman and bringing justice to her and her family.

In 2023, the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, in collaboration with the Heflin Police Department, submitted forensic evidence to Othram in hopes that advanced DNA testing could assist with the identification of the unknown woman. With evidence in hand, Othram scientists developed a DNA extract from the forensic evidence and then developed a comprehensive DNA profile for the woman using Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing®. Once the profile was successfully built, Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team produced new investigative leads that were provided to the law enforcement investigators.

Using these new leads, investigators contacted potential family members of Cleburne County Jane Doe. Additional investigative work and follow up DNA testing enabled investigators to positively identify the woman as **Clara Kopp Reynolds** of Georgia. Reynolds was last seen with a male friend and was supposed to have been traveling to Florida. Clara Reynolds was born in 1947 and went missing in late 1988 or early 1989. While the Heflin Police Department has identified a suspect in the death of Reynolds, additional details cannot be released at this time as this is an active investigation. We will provide updates as they become available.



Over the past three decades, countless investigative hours have been spent working to solve this case. Captain Scott Bonner stated that “caring about our communities is the biggest contribution we can make,” as he described a conversation that he had several years ago with Retired Chief Deputy Tim Gossage regarding this case. Retired Chief Deputy Gossage hoped for justice and some closure for this woman's family and hoped that she could be identified and receive a proper burial.

Anyone that knows about the case or Clara Reynolds is asked to contact Captain Scott Bonner with the city of Heflin Police Department or submit a tip using the email address sbonner@cityofheflin.org.